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**MISS ELIZA ROSSELL.**

A TALE OF

**THE UNFORTUNATE FEMALE.**

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WRITTEN BY A FRIEND.

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**BOSTON:**

PUBLISHED BY Z. D. MONTAGUE.

1845.

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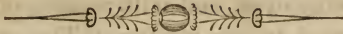
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# MISS ELIZA ROSSELL.

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## CHAPTER I.

ONE fine morning in the Spring, when all nature seemed to rejoice—the trees and flowers had begun to send forth their tender leaves, and the sweet feathered songsters had returned from the warm climates to take up their abode with us and spend another happy season—on such a morning as this, when every thing external invited to peace and contentment, Miss Rossell was seated in the parlor with her fond parents, surrounded by kind and loving brothers and sisters; and all seemed to partake as one in the enjoyment of a happy family circle.

As Mr. Rossell rose to leave the room, he turned to his children and said, “How thankful we ought to be for the blessings we receive; our health is continued; our earthly wants are all supplied; and all nature seems to be clothed in smiles, calling upon us to rejoice and give thanks.”

“Yes, father,” said Eliza, “we do rejoice, and hope this morning of our happiness will always continue with us.”

“That is a good wish, dear,” said Eliza’s mother, “but a great deal depends upon the way you steer your frail bark, for the current you have to strive against is strong, and unless you *watch* every moment through life, you may run against some rock or quicksand that may ruin your happiness and seal your doom forever, thus casting a gloom over all your real and dear friends.”

Eliza, who was very handsome, raised her large blue, keen and piercing eyes, and with a smile on her countenance, observed to her mother, "The rest, perhaps, may be led astray, but there is no danger of me, for you know I am always on the lookout. I am not heedless as my sisters are. When I make up my mind, all the world could not convince me I am wrong; you well know that, mother."

"Yes, I do," replied her mother, "I am well aware you are rather headstrong, and that I am afraid, will prove your destruction."

After this last remark, her mother cast her eyes to the floor and sat as if she was in deep and anxious thought. A pause ensued—gloomy thoughts seemed to take possession of each one's heart, and all looked sad except the gay Eliza.

Mr. Rossell, who had been standing, an anxious listener to the foregoing conversation, broke the silence at last, by observing, "We must hope, and try to do, according to our best abilities, that which is right, and trust in a kind Providence. If we do not, curses must and will follow us, and our conduct will at last prove a complete overthrow to all earthly happiness, and seal our doom for destruction. If we sow to the wind, we shall surely reap the whirlwind. Sin and vice can prosper but a little while, then comes the winter of their discontent, when forsaken and despised by those who had been kind and true-hearted friends. I hope, however, such unhappiness will never possess your unsuspecting, innocent hearts, my dear children; but you know not what the vile of this world will do for the sake of accomplishing their fiendish schemes, to pluck the fairest flowers in the land from their true bosom friends; and



like the flowers of the field, the fairest are selected, but as soon as they begin to fade and lose their charms, they are thrown away to be trodden under foot, deserted by the very wretch who had torn them from their only support."

"Yes, father," said Eliza, with a look of assurance, "we are aware that enemies will do much to accomplish their dishonorable schemes, but we can easily discover them; if they are our enemies we will not trust or believe them, or even be seen in their company; then we shall not be in their power."

"My dear children," replied Mr. Rossell, addressing the little group, "you must consider that those who wish to ruin your happiness will not appear openly to your face as your enemies; if you ever have any open, avowed enemies, you need not fear them. Those who seek to accomplish base designs for the ruin of one's character are *pretended* friends,—those who have an opportunity to mingle in your society and secure your esteem and affection, (fixing his anxious gaze upon Eliza,) yet, are busy in watching you, to collect every blemish, real or imaginary, to misrepresent your character to those whose envious feelings would cause them to rejoice over your ruin. In proof of this, let us look back to the time when Christ was upon earth. Who was he betrayed by? Was it not by one who pretended to be his bosom friend? Yes! and by a kiss! Without the aid of this *pretender*, the combined powers of earth and hell could not succeed in destroying him;—those mighty powers who could crush a nation with a blow, dared not crucify Him, until they found a TRAITOR IN A PRETENDED FRIEND!

"We hardly know where to look for true friends.

Always examine and scan closely the motives that actuate their pretended friendship. Be cautious how you desert old and tried friends for new faces. Outward appearances are often deceitful; knaves and villains, like the demon, to deceive must wear a good appearance. I trust the good sense of my intelligent children will not permit them to be caught in the snares set for the ignorant and superstitious. Like the wolf, the deceiver comes in sheep's clothing, and like a thief at night, when we are off our guard."

"Well father," said Eliza, "I admire your sentiments, but I think they will answer for others much better than for me. You know that all the fine young men always respect me, and give a pleasant nod and smile when they pass me; they would not even try to harm me, you know that very well, father."

The blood flowed fresh in the father's face, he paused a few moments, then said, "You know but little of the deceitfulness of mankind, or you would never talk in this way. I sincerely hope you will never know, by experience, the depravity of human beings."

"My dear children, it has been the constant care of your parents to collect enough of this world's goods together to enable them to bring you up in such a manner that you should be ornaments in society and an honor to your country; that you should respect yourselves and thus cause others to respect you; that your virtuous conduct should cause our hearts to rejoice in our declining years."

Turning to Eliza, Mr. Rossell continued, "I perceive, my dear, that of late, you seem to be much attracted by John Sheldon."

"Why should I not be, father," replied Eliza, "he is

a *nice young man*, and has some property; you all know he is very handsome, and any of the young ladies would like to take my place, and give all they are worth in the bargain."

"No! sister," said the gentle Sarah. "It is true he is handsome and can appear well in any company, but I should not wish for him if I could have him as well as not."

"A good reason why you say so," replied the impetuous Eliza. "It is only because you could not get him, that's all, Sarah."

"Upon my honor, Eliza, I do not fancy him," protested Sarah. "Father, do you?"

"I have told Eliza my views respecting him," observed Mr. Rossell; "she knows them well, but heeds them not."

"Well," said Eliza, "I do not think my brothers and sisters need trouble themselves about me. I think they had better try to take care of themselves and let my affairs alone. Because I have been rather more lucky than they in getting a fine looking fellow who has some property and who can appear well in society, they must borrow trouble about me."

"Indeed," observed Mr Rossell, "it is quite true that John Sheldon is handsome and can appear very well; also, that he has some property; but it is not his own hard earnings,—it was left to him,—but instead of adding to it, he has scattered it—squandered it, in feeding his own vices. His principles I completely detest."

"What are his principles?" said Eliza, in a quick and rather impatient manner, her face reddening at the same time, showing that her father's words had pierced her very soul.

“Why, my dear,” answered Mr. Rossell, “we know he regards not the rights of man or the principles of morality. He does not regard the teachings of Scripture as being more binding than fables; and, above all, he honors not the Being who created the heavens and the earth; who hath given him his life and breath and all that he enjoys. All that he seems to care for is, to make a great show in the world, to gratify himself, to carouse and spend his evenings in scenes where vice reigns triumphant.”

“Father,” said Eliza, “I like to see a young man who can and will enjoy himself while he is young.”

“Well, Eliza,” replied Mr. Rossell, “I am sorry to think that you do not stop to consider one moment before you make up your mind. You are too hasty. This Sheldon is an arch, shrewd fellow, and if he once gets you in his power, I am well convinced you will rue the day that you ever saw him. If you continue to notice him, you will cast a blight over the happiness of those dear friends who love and respect you now. Forget him, and you may choose a more fit companion from among the many respectable young men who delight to wait upon you.”

“Father, I have *my* choice now,” said Eliza, firmly.

“Yes, Eliza,” replied her father, “but I fear you will see the day when you will bitterly repent your choice.”

“Never mind, father,” said Eliza, “I will run the risk of that.”

“Well, Eliza,” replied Mr. Rossell, almost discouraged with his headstrong girl, “if you, who are considered one of the most beautiful and lovely girls in the town, will rashly throw yourself away to a worthless fellow,

I cannot help it. I have given you the best advice I am able to give, but you refuse to accept it or to be governed by it. One thing I wish to ask of you. Do not disclose to Sheldon, what a loving heart, with affectionate interest for a daughter's welfare, has now compelled me to say to you."

"Your first advice I cannot accept, father," said Eliza; "but in regard to your request not to betray your confidence, I promise, upon my word and honor, I will not reveal to Sheldon what you have said."

For a short time all were silent, and apparently in deep meditation, when their attention was aroused by the stopping of a carriage before the house, and the next moment a loud rap was heard at the door. Soon, John Sheldon made his appearance, with a countenance as fine as the morning. Bowing to the family, he observed that he had called to request Miss Eliza to take a ride with him.

In a few moments Eliza made her appearance equipped for a ride. Sheldon handed her into the carriage and seating himself by her side, rapidly drove away. Sheldon noticed that Eliza's countenance was somewhat altered; though she evidently tried hard to appear as if nothing unusual had happened. The late conversation with her father had somewhat ruffled her feelings, and she could not suppress some indications of it.

As they rode along, Sheldon, who was on the lookout for head winds and breakers, knowing that the family must hear things not altogether in his favor, if the truth was told, said to Eliza in a quizzing way, "You don't believe that, do you?"

"What?" said Eliza.

“Oh, you know well enough what I mean,” replied Sheldon.

“What in the world do you mean?” asked Eliza.

“Do you suppose I am altogether in the dark? I was well aware that there would be lies told about me,” replied Sheldon, hoping in this way to elicit from her some secret to satisfy himself of the knowledge the family had obtained of his true character.

Eliza, without much thought, fearing he knew what had passed between her father and herself, incautiously suffered herself to be caught in the snare set for her, and confidently revealed to Sheldon all the conversation she so solemnly promised never to disclose.

This raised Sheldon’s indignation against the family, and he determined to be revenged. How to accomplish this, he cared not much, but first resolved he would secure his victim.

After riding several miles, through a part of the country where the fields were covered with beauty and the birds warbled their sweet notes to encourage the peasant as he toiled, and the traveler as he passed by, they returned safely to Eliza’s home. As Sheldon waited upon Eliza into the parlor, his countenance wore a smile, as usual, yet malice and revenge rankled in his heart. After a few trivial remarks about their ride, he bade the family good morning and retired.

Eliza, after putting away her bonnet and shawl, returned to the parlor where her mother and brothers and sisters were engaged in their work or studies. Her countenance beamed with excitement and delight, as she exclaimed, “What a beautiful ride! delightful! to take an airing with a handsome, genteel young man on such a lovely morning.” All present united in giving

her good advice. They feared she was allowing herself to be deceived. But it seemed useless to remonstrate with her. Her predominant passion, SELF-WILL, triumphed over the better judgment of her true friends. She not only disregarded their advice, but censured them, petulantly, for not minding their own business, and expressed a hope that hereafter they would keep their tongues to themselves; when she wanted their advice she would ask for it, and then it would be time enough to give it. She told them if they troubled her much more with their interference, she would go where they could not meddle with her affairs; adding, that as she was twenty-two years of age, she thought she was old enough to take care of herself.

This was a trying scene for Eliza's mother; but it seemed that the more she warned her against Sheldon the more she loved him and hated her own family.

Soon, John Sheldon and Eliza Rossell were published for marriage. The wedding ceremony was performed;—they became husband and wife.

They lived in good style; their house was well supplied with the most costly furniture, rather superior to any of their neighbors, and for a while the tide of their affairs seemed to run as smoothly as any one could wish. Eliza now visited her parents to enjoy her triumph. "How much better I have done," said she, "by taking my own way, rather than listen to the fables and nonsense of those who are always borrowing trouble for other people. I told you, mother, that all the world could not convince me I was wrong when I had once made up my mind I was right; so I married as I chose; and my friends may eat their own words

for meddling with my affairs. They begin to see I was the only one in the right and they were all in the wrong; yes, mother, and you with the rest;" and she looked her mother in the face, with a significant smile of triumph, that seemed to pierce her fond parent to the heart, causing the fountains of grief to open and the tears to trickle down her cheeks. Eliza felt that her triumph was complete. Her mother simply observed, "I hope these happy hours will never cease while life lasts. I am sure I never advised you to act in any way contrary to your own will, unless I thought it would prove a blessing to you in the end. Time will prove what the result will be."

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE DIFFERENCE.—THE DUTIFUL SARAH.

We will leave John Sheldon and his gay bride, for a short time, to plod their way through the troubles of life as best they may, while we briefly chronicle some events in the life of Eliza's sister—the gentle Sarah.

Sarah Rossell, who was eighteen years of age, was quite the reverse of her sister, in her disposition and feelings. Although of a lively turn of mind, she was lively and considerate, and very respectful towards her parents and friends. Her parents having been deeply grieved by the ungracious conduct of their undutiful Eliza, now looked upon Sarah as a staff to support and comfort their declining years. Being the oldest daughter at home, she was regarded by all the family as their main stay. The youngest children looked to



her for advice and counsel and felt sure of finding in her a friend and protector. The gloom and sadness which Eliza's conduct had spread over the family, gradually wore away, as Sarah, by her kind and dutiful attention to the wishes of her parents, cheered and made glad their hearts.

Not many months had passed before new thoughts occupied the mind of Sarah. She had a suitor. When the family were all assembled one evening in the parlor, she confidently laid the matter before her parents and affectionately asked their advice and counsel. She told them who her suitor was, and all she knew about him, and wished her parents and the rest of the family to express themselves freely and tell her what they thought she ought to do, as her action might involve her happiness for life. She promised not to betray their confidence as Eliza had done, and expressed her willingness to follow their advice.

After discussing the subject Sarah had introduced, with much kind feeling and anxious tenderness, expressed by the parents for her welfare, it seemed to be the unanimous opinion of the whole family that it would not be for the best for Sarah to receive the visits of the young man who solicited her company. They stated to Sarah, fully, their reasons, and she was satisfied upon reflection, that they were right, and expressed her determination to follow their advice. Accordingly, the first opportunity that presented itself, she informed the young man, in as kind a manner as possible, that he must excuse her from receiving his addresses, as it would not be agreeable to her. Thus happily terminated her first trial of fidelity to her parents, and they were overjoyed and thanked God for such a treasure as

they possessed in their obedient daughter, praying that he would preserve and protect her and their family from future troubles.

In less than three months Sarah received another offer, which she herself regarded with more favor than the first. As in the first instance, however, she resolved to ask the advice of her parents and friends, before she allowed herself to receive his attentions. After a consultation, in which the young man's character was canvassed pro and con, his principles scrutinized, and the character of his associates considered, it was agreed that there could be no objection to the young man on the part of the family, and that it would be safe for their darling Sarah to unite her fortune with him for life if she was suited and could love him.

Happy family! happy in each other's confidence. The end will show your decision was correct.

Preparations were rapidly making for a wedding. Two happy, virtuous hearts were about to be united for life. All was bustle and activity till the joyous day arrived. Mr. Jones, the clergyman, who, by the way, also performed the marriage ceremony for Eliza, had arrived, and in a few moments the nuptials were to be celebrated. The friends and relatives were assembled, and with the family, presented a joyous company. The door opened, and William Benson, the happy bridegroom, with the lovely Sarah leaning on his arm, entered the room, following the bridesman and bridesmaid, and took a position in front of their pastor. The solemn ceremony was soon finished. They had vowed eternal constancy to each other—they were husband and wife.

The happiness of Sarah's parents seemed to be com-

plete, as they gazed on the youthful pair. "Bless God!" said Mr. Rossell, his eyes filling with tears of joy. "May heaven's richest blessings be your portion, my dear children," responded his wife. "Amen!" echoed all the company. After the usual festivities were over, the company broke up and retired to their homes.

Mr. Benson took his bride to their new home, which had been prepared with a regard for their real comfort and according to his circumstances in life. He was not rich, but was engaged in a good business, and with his industrious habits and a good reputation, bid fair to succeed and prosper to the satisfaction of himself and friends.

We will now leave this happy couple for a while, wishing them much joy, and trace the remainder of Eliza's career.

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### CHAPTER III.

ELIZA IN TROUBLE. HER HUSBAND SHOT AS A HIGHWAYMAN.

Alas! what misery time reveals. Twelve years had passed away since the marriage of Eliza. To her, they had been, for the most part, years of unhappiness and vain regret. The consciousness that she had willfully plunged herself into the troubles she experienced did not tend to lighten the burden of her sorrow, but rather added poignancy to her grief. Deserted by her husband, poor, sick, and miserable, she was drinking to the dregs the bitter draught, from which she refused to turn when kindly warned by her parents and friends.

“There was a Christian friend  
Who pitied that poor soul,  
And sought with harmless art  
From sin to make it whole.”

The Rev. Mr. Jones, the clergyman who attended the wedding of Eliza, had lately returned from a foreign land where for some years he had been engaged as a missionary to the heathen. Having been intimate in Mr. Rossell's family while he officiated as their pastor, he felt a deep interest in the two daughters he had married under such different circumstances.

Soon after his arrival he resolved to search them out and learn their history. Passing through a narrow, retired street, one day, at the north part of the town, he noticed a little boy, sitting on the door step of an old dilapidated building, who was weeping bitterly. Mr. Jones stopped and looked at the little fellow. He appeared to be thinly clad and looked the picture of distress. Handing him a few cents Mr. Jones asked the boy to tell him his name. “James Sheldon, sir,” replied the lad, and immediately added, “My mother is very sick, and I am afraid she won't get well and then I shan't have any body to take care of me,” and the little fellow began to cry. Mr. Jones was surprised at what the child had told him. “Is it possible that Eliza, the gay Eliza, that I married to the dashing John Sheldon has come to this?” said Mr. Jones, musingly. “No! it cannot be! and yet the lad has a little of her look;” trying to sooth the child's grief and hush his sobs, Mr. Jones asked him if he had a father living and if his name was John Sheldon. “Yes sir,” replied the little lad, pleased at the interest the stranger seemed to manifest, “his name is John; he's gone off, and has'nt been at home this ever so

long,—and I've got a brother John, too; he's bigger than me."

"Well, my little man," said Mr. Jones, "will you show me the room where your mother is? I should like to see her. Do you say she is very sick?"

"O yes sir," replied the lad; "she is so sick and in such pain and makes such groans, I can't bear to be in the room;—oh dear, my poor mother!" and his eyes again filled with big tears.

"Well, let us go in," said Mr. Jones; and the boy guided him to a room on the lower floor of the house; he opened the door without ceremony and entered. A bed, which contained the patient, was in one corner of the room; an elderly woman, who appeared to be a nurse, was stooping over the fire preparing some gruel. Seeing a stranger enter she hastily curtsied, bid him good morning, and requested him to take a seat. Mr. Jones informed her that he was a clergyman, and that he had called to inquire after the sick woman she was nursing.

"She is quite low, poor creature," said the nurse, "Indeed, sir, she is nearly broken-hearted, she's had so much trouble; but her friends are very kind to her and do every thing in the world to make her comfortable. This is a very old house she lives in, and Mrs Benson would have her removed to more comfortable quarters, but she lived here when her husband went off; she was taken sick in this room and the doctor thinks it would not be safe to move her now. But she can't stay long, she grows more feeble every day, her heart's near broke."

After listening patiently to the account of the good nurse, Mr. Jones asked if he could speak with the sick

woman. The nurse went softly to the bed and finding her patient awake, informed her that a minister had come and would like to speak to her.

“I shall be glad to see him,” was faintly articulated in reply.

Mr. Jones went to the bedside. His fears were confirmed as he gazed upon the features of the sick. In that emaciated, sorrow-stricken countenance, he beheld the once gay, thoughtless and headstrong Eliza Rossell—she who, against the wishes of her friends, became the wife of the unprincipled John Sheldon. Taking her hand in his, he spoke to her words of kindness, and soon informed her who he was.

At first, Eliza appeared glad to see him, but a sickening shudder passed over her as she thought of her own sufferings and the miseries she had brought upon herself by her own headstrong and willful action. Mr. Jones inquired about her husband. She attempted to speak, but a flood of grief choked her utterance, and tears stole down her cheeks. Mr. Jones found that he had touched a cord that let loose the floodgates of her sorrow. He changed the subject, and after some proper conversation, suited to a person in her situation, he commended her to her Heavenly Father, and promising to call again soon, bade her good morning and withdrew.

Mr. Jones left this scene with sad thoughts, as recollections of the past crowded into his mind. “How changed, her condition?” he said to himself as he hurried away. “A few years have passed, and all the fair prospects and visions of future earthly bliss of this frail mortal are crushed; hope extinguished! Alas! alas! the frequent consequence of disregarding parental

advice. How transient—fleeting—uncertain—delusive are the joys of this world! How insufficient to satisfy the soul! Would that such scenes as I have just left might teach mortals a lesson of wisdom; even to set their affections on things above, and not on the things of earth!”

Thus mused our good minister, as he directed his steps to the house of an acquaintance to inquire further into the sad history of Eliza during his absence. Before he reached the dwelling he heard a carriage coming rapidly down the street towards him; he turned a look towards the carriage when nearly abreast of him, and lo! he beheld Mr. and Mrs Benson; the very couple he had married ten years before—a day or two before he left for foreign parts—he could not easily mistake the gentle Sarah Rossell, nor could she forget her beloved pastor. They simultaneously recognized each other—the carriage stopped, and mutual congratulations passed between these long-parted friends. Mr. Jones was invited to take a seat in the carriage and accompany them home to dine. He gladly accepted the kind invitation, hoping he should now be able to learn all he desired of Eliza and her husband. Indeed, he regarded this meeting as quite providential, and his kind heart was filled with emotions of gratitude. They soon reached the splendid dwelling of Mr. Benson. Fortune had favored him; he had been wonderfully prospered in his business and had arrived at such a state of competence, that he was able to live in the most fashionable style. Neatness and comfort, as well as elegance, were studied in their domestic arrangements, while contentment and love seemed to be the presiding geniuses of their dwelling. The dinner hour soon arrived, and the

company were seated around the table. Mr. Jones entertained them with an account of his fortunes while he had been absent; describing his adventures—his mode of life—his occupations as a missionary and his success in converting the heathen. It was a rich treat to Mr. Benson and his wife, and the time passed pleasantly away.

After dinner, the three friends were seated in Mr. Benson's front parlor, earnestly engaged in conversation. Sarah inquired of Mr. Jones if he had heard how her poor sister Eliza had made out. He then informed them of his morning's adventure and thanked Sarah for introducing the subject, as he was most anxious and curious to know all the particulars.

“You very well know what she was,” replied Sarah. “She always would have her own way. She was considered very handsome, and was quite an idol with that miserable class of young men who care for appearances more than improvement of mind or principles of honor and virtue. After Eliza and John Sheldon were married, they seemed to live happily together for a while; then she was taken sick, her beauty began to fade and Sheldon appeared to treat her coldly. He soon manifested a greater fondness for the company of his old associates than he did for that of his wife. In the course of five years she had four children; she had a great deal of sickness. He had now almost entirely forsaken her; he was sometimes at home at his meals, but his evenings and nights were spent away from his home and in scenes of bacchanalian revelry and carousal. But Eliza's love abated not for her husband, unworthy as he was; she was willing to make any sacrifice for him. She would try to coax him, she



would even kneel before him and plead with him to leave his wicked associates, to be kind to her and love her. But he heeded not her words—he loved her not—he feared not God or man. He even reproached and upbraided her for her weakness in ever loving him; for leaving her friends contrary to their wishes and clinging to him when he had no regard for her. He would tell her; ‘If you had not been a fool you would have listened to the advice and warnings of your true friends who could have had none but good motives for their counsel. If you are unhappy you may thank yourself for it; I am glad of it, you are rightly served!’”

“Monster!” exclaimed Mr. Jones, who could not contain his indignation at the recital of such baseness.

Sarah continued, “Sheldon treated her in a most shameful manner. He stripped the house of all that was worth taking, that he might sell it to raise money to purchase the gratification of his lusts; for he had pursued such a reckless and abandoned course that his property was all wasted away—he had nothing left. At this time Eliza was confined to her bed by sickness. One of her children was also dangerously ill, and we feared it could not live. While she was in this helpless condition, Sheldon came into her room one day and said to her, in a most heartless manner, ‘I am going to leave you and your brats, forever, and now you may starve or go back to your old friends whom you so shamefully abused because they told you the truth about me. You would not believe them; now you know for yourself;’ and he turned away and left her to perish. Her agony of soul, to receive such treatment from him she had so fondly loved, for whom she had deserted all her friends, cannot be described. And now to be deserted

forever, to think she should never see him again,—it was too much for her to bear; she uttered a despairing shriek and swooned away.

“For a short time before their marriage and for a while after, Sheldon had kept himself aloof from his old associates, that he might better succeed in accomplishing his object by securing the love of Eliza; but he soon returned to them again, with a more keen relish for their pleasures than ever. He gambled and lost every dollar he was worth. He was far down on the road to perdition when several of his associates had formed a plan to go to New Orleans, and he resolved to accompany them.

Sarah then read the following letter, which Eliza had lately received from her husband, and which gives an account of the remainder of his career.

“*St. Louis, Oct. 12, 1844.*

“MRS. ELIZA SHELDON:

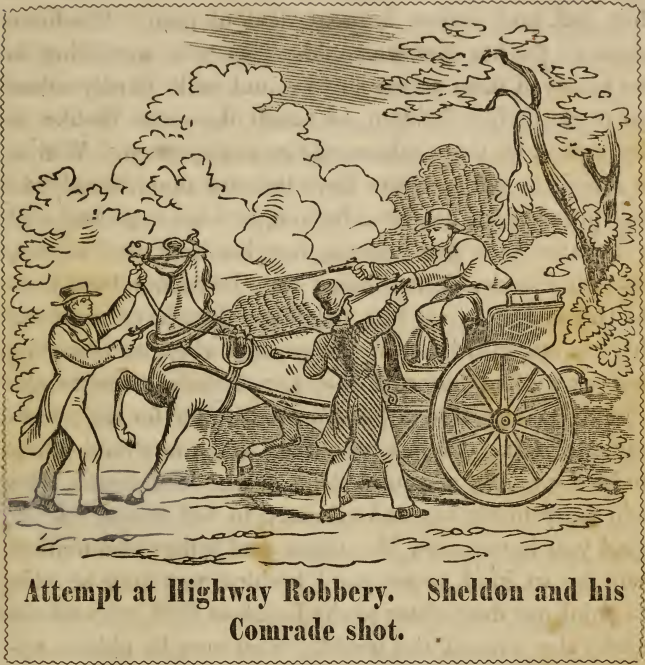
“I take my pen to inform you that I am on a bed which I shall not leave until death closes my eyes, which the doctor says will be in less than forty-eight hours. Perhaps you know what I have been, and who and what I am. Have you got your eyes open yet? for you used to be so blinded by love, that you would not believe the truth about me when it was told by your best and truest friends; and you, like a fool, deserted them and clung to one who had no fear of God and no regard for man. I had no principle of honor or virtue; my associates were those like me, and you showed that you could encourage and smile at sin; you was a blind, headstrong, deluded fool, to discard

all your true-hearted friends, and leave them because they gave you their best advice, which, if you had followed, would have saved you from your present misery. How did you treat them for their kindness? I will leave you to answer at midnight hour, when all is silent as the grave. If you had listened to the advice of your family, as you ought, I should not have been cursed with you. I saw that you was easily led astray by pretended love, so I determined to secure you. I never did love you, though I swore to you I did. You are not the first I attempted to deceive; I kept company with several others for a while, but when their friends informed them who and what I was, they treated me as I deserved, and I troubled them no more. If you had done the same I should have escaped the unhappiness you have brought upon me, and I am sure you would have been better off. You deserve all that has come upon you; and for my part, I deserve no other place than the lowest depth of hell! Long before this letter reaches you, if there is a hell, I shall be there.

“I'll now inform you how I got into my present difficulty, knowing it will be an aggravation to you. After I left you, I went to New Orleans, with some comrades, where we committed various thefts, and entered into several fraudulent transactions, by which we secured considerable money. Finding we were mistrusted, we thought, to make good our escape, we would leave the city and travel north. We purchased horses and commenced our journey; we had traveled about forty miles, when we discovered that we were pursued, and that our pursuers would soon be down upon us. We

left our horses and took for the woods, a short distance from us, determined, as we were well armed, not to be taken alive. We were so hotly pursued, that we turned and fired upon our pursuers, and several of them fell; whether they were killed or not I can't say, but if they were not, it was not our fault. The party suddenly halted and returned our fire, when two of our comrades fell dead, and the rest of us escaped in the midst of the confusion which this engagement created. We traveled some days through woods and fields, before daring to make our appearance in the public road, fearing we should be recognized. At last we took a boat and went up the river to St. Louis, where we lived like jovial fellows till our money was all spent. Then we had recourse to our wits again. We did not hesitate to do anything to get money, if we thought we could escape detection. It would not do for gentlemen of our cloth to live without money, so we determined to raise the wind the first chance. One day we saw an old rich drover receive several thousand dollars in cash; he was rather careless with his money and did not seem to be afraid of showing it. This opportunity was not to be neglected; we determined we would have it. Knowing which road he usually traveled, and that he would return home that night, we started before him, well armed, and found a good place to secrete ourselves, and there awaited his arrival. Presently he came up the road, and when he had reached our hiding place, we sprang out and seized his horse and demanded his money; but instead of getting that, we both got shot for our trouble. My comrade was killed outright, and I was mortally wounded; so you see here's an end to my career, for there is no hope that I

can recover. I have got my deserts as well as you, if that's any comfort; for it's an old saying that 'misery loves company.'



**Attempt at Highway Robbery. Sheldon and his Comrade shot.**

“Now, farewell! you may return to your friends or perish alone, I care not which. You revealed to me what your family said against me, in confidence, and I then resolved I'd be revenged. I am now satisfied—my revenge is complete! You are ruined and I am lost! Adieu!

JOHN SHELDON.”

“Eliza murmured not—no reproaches came from her lips—she loved him still, though he had deserted and despised her,” continued Sarah. “Although she makes

no complaint, the agony of her soul no tongue can utter. Her health has been fast declining since she received the letter; for several weeks she has been confined to her bed, and suffers a great deal of pain. We have done all for her that we could. She was unwilling to be removed from where she is, and will hardly allow us to clothe her children, so much does she dislike to be noticed by those whose advice she spurned. Within a few days she seems to have become much humbled; her proud spirit has been broken, and we hope she will yet realize that her parents, her brothers and sisters, are her friends. She knows they have not been neglectful of her in all her troubles; they have watched her course with intense interest, and when he who stole her away had deserted her, her friends came to the rescue, and prevented her from suffering for the necessities of life. All has been done that she would allow to be done; but a wounded spirit who can heal? We call daily to see her and minister to her wants. I am glad you have come, Mr. Jones, and father and mother will be so glad to see you! besides, you may be able to point our dear sister to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. You may be able to apply to her wounded heart the healing consolations of religion, and direct her to the great Physician."

Mr. Jones was so well pleased with his friends, that he accepted their invitation to spend the remainder of the day with them, and while they were waiting for tea, he observed to Mr. Benson that he presumed he had been highly favored in worldly things, judging from appearances.

"Yes," replied Mr. Benson, "a kind providence has smiled upon my efforts; my business succeeded better

than I had reason to expect, and by several fortunate trades, with close application to business, I have succeeded in accumulating property enough to make us comfortable, under the blessing of God, the remainder of our days, besides having something to spare for those around us who are poor. With hearts that feel for others' woes, and the means of bestowing charity, we take much pleasure in alleviating sorrow and helping the unfortunate. My good wife is always alive to the wants of others, and she lets no opportunity slip, without making some hearts glad."

"Happy couple!" exclaimed Mr. Jones; "it makes me happy to be with you—to learn of your prosperity; I rejoice that under such prosperity your hearts are not lifted up with pride, and that you do not forget your fellow-creatures who need your aid. I trust you have treasures laid up in heaven. Sarah, how is it that you have made out so much better than your sister?"

"Not because of any worthiness in me, sir," replied Sarah, meekly, "but because I had kind friends who gave me advice which I observed. I hope I appreciate, in some degree, the worth of parental counsel and advice. If I had not listened to their admonitions, I too should have been married to a miserable, unprincipled fellow, who has brought disgrace upon all that have been connected with him. He is now destitute and his family are supported by charity. Through a brother, who knew more of him than I did, my family were made acquainted with his character; they kindly advised me; I listened to them, and acted accordingly; and was thus saved from that life of misery which was soon the portion of the lovely Julia B—. She

was a young friend of mine, who, with her unsuspecting heart, believed that 'all is gold that glitters.' She was caught in the snare from which I escaped, and bitter experience taught her the worth of that advice she would not receive from her friends. She has since died of a broken heart. There! there!" exclaimed Sarah, pointing at the same time towards the street, "there is the very man who once nearly captivated my heart—who afterwards married Julia B——; look at him."

Mr. Jones walked to the window, and looking into the street, he saw with astonishment a miserable vagabond, apparently half crazy, who was singing and hallooing, and occasionally throwing dirt into the air, to frighten some children that were returning from school.

"Well, Sarah," said Mr. Jones, as he was about taking his leave, "I have spent this day very profitably. I thank you for your kindness to me, and also for the instruction I have gained from your recital of the sad history of Eliza, and your own happy one in contrast. As saith the Scripture, so may Eliza's history be written in a few words, 'Pride goeth before, and destruction followeth after.' To-morrow, if we live, we will visit her together, and try to administer both temporal and spiritual comforts. He bade them good night, and departed.

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One cold and stormy night, about a week after the conversation recorded above, Mr. Jones was passing the evening at Mr. Benson's. They were seated around the fire, engaged in conversation, when they were startled by the sudden and loud ringing of the door-bell.



“Who can that be?” exclaimed Mrs. Benson. “I should hardly think any one would venture out in such a storm. Perhaps, my dear,” said she, addressing her husband, “some poor person is in distress, and needs our assistance.”

“They shall have it, then,” replied Mr. Benson, “if it is in our power to give it.”

Mr. Benson quickly left the room and hastened to the door, which a servant had just opened to see who was there. A little girl, not more than ten years of age, stood waiting for admittance. “Come in, my dear,” said Mr. Benson, kindly; “come in out of the reach of this cold storm as quick as you can. What do you want? Is any body sick?”

“Yes sir, mother is much worse, and I want to see aunt Sarah,” said the little girl.

“Oh, you are little Mary Sheldon!” exclaimed Mr. Benson, taking her hand. “Come right into the parlor, dear, where your aunt Sarah is, and get warm. Your clothes are wet through, and I am afraid you’ll take cold.” He led her into the room, and as soon as her aunt saw her she exclaimed, “Why, Mary! is this you? What could have brought you here this dreadful stormy night? Is your mother worse?”

“Mother wants you and grandfather and grandmother and all my uncles and aunts to come and see her right away. She wants to see you immediately, for she is much worse to-night, and this storm seems to trouble her dreadfully. You will come, won’t you, and see my poor, sick mother? for she says she cannot die in peace until she sees you all. Do come, then, won’t you, aunt Sarah?” and the little girl rose to depart.

“Wait, Mary!” said her aunt Sarah; “you shall go with us. Mr. Benson has ordered the carriage to be got ready with despatch, and we will be ready in a few moments. You must go with us, Mr. Jones,” added she, addressing him.

The carriage was soon ready. Mr. and Mrs. Benson, with Mr. Jones and Mary, entered the carriage, forgetting the storm which continued to rage with unabated fury, and only intent on relieving distress and administering comfort to the sick. Mr. Benson had sent a messenger to Mr. Rossell, requesting the attendance of the family at Eliza’s house without delay.

They rode as rapidly as the darkness of the night would permit, and soon the little Mary, who was looking most anxiously at the houses as they passed along, exclaimed, “This is it! this is our house! stop! stop!” and she could hardly wait for the carriage to stop before she jumped out. As they were alighting, they heard the sound of carriage wheels coming up the street. “There comes grandfather and all the folks, I hope,” said Mary, as she stood on tiptoe and strained her eyes to discern the carriage. In a moment her hopes were realized. The carriage stopped. The friends entered the house in silence, guided by the little girl. There sat the doctor, who rose at the entrance of the family, and bowed a recognition—the nurse was busy in preparing some medicine—the children were about the bed, weeping, and several of the neighbors were standing about the room ready to offer assistance. Eliza was bolstered up in her bed, apparently in a dying state. For the last hour, they had expected every moment would be her last, so great had been her distress.

Eliza recognized her parents and her brothers and sisters. A ray of joy shot across her pale features as she looked upon them. Some medicine which had just been administered, seemed to afford her a temporary relief. She improved it to unburthen her overcharged heart to her parents, and her friends. Her father and and mother stood beside the bed; they each took her hand in theirs, and gazed in tearful, silent grief upon their dying, and, as they hoped, repentant daughter.



**Eliza's Confession. She receives the forgiveness of her Parents.**

“Oh!” said she, in a faint voice, looking round upon the family, “I am glad you have come to see your unworthy daughter and sister this terrible night. I was

afraid you would not come; and yet I had not the least reason to think you would forsake me in a dying hour, after being my true friends through all my misfortunes and troubles, notwithstanding I have abused and shamefully treated you, and set at naught your good advice. Oh, will you forgive me, dearest father and mother, and my dear brothers and sisters? forgive my ingratitude and unkindness! I hope I now feel humbled and willing to do—what I have never been willing to do before—to ask your forgiveness for my ill-treatment of you. You have been my truest friends—you have never deserted me; and I cannot die in peace without hearing from your own lips that you forgive me. It seems as if I had lived the last hour, only that I might receive my dying request—to be forgiven!”

The family now gathered around the bed, and each one kindly assured her of their free forgiveness. A mighty load seemed to be removed from her heart; her joy found utterance in tears. Mr. Jones spoke words of consolation to her. He spoke of her nearness to eternity, and asked her how she felt in view of death. As soon as she was able to speak, she replied that she felt as if she could die happy, now that she had received the forgiveness of her family. She had thought much upon what he had said to her during her sickness. She had tried to pray; and she hoped her sins were forgiven of God. It was truly a solemn scene, and at Eliza's request Mr. Jones offered a prayer. He poured out his full soul in eloquent thanksgivings to God, that the lost had been found—that the dead had been made alive again. He commended her soul to God, and asked that she might have a gracious entrance into His king-

dom. He prayed for her children, that God would be a Father to the fatherless; he prayed for her parents, her brothers and sisters, that their grief might be turned into joy, for the salvation of her soul. "Amen!" was responded in all their hearts.

After a moment of silence, Eliza looked upon her four children, who stood by her bedside. "What will become of you, my little ones?" she said with a sad tone. "Who will watch over you when I am gone, and warn you of the dangers which surround you? You see your mother about to leave you—Oh, who will be your friends?" Her parents, and her sister Sarah, told her to give herself no uneasiness on account of her children, assuring her they would take care of them, and that they should be well provided for—that they should not want for a home or friends. This assurance greatly cheered the dying mother. "I thank you, with my dying breath," said she; "it is like heaping coals of fire on my head to receive so much kindness from those I have so much slighted. I can die happy now!—I am forgiven!—my children have protectors!—my last wish is gratified!" and she fainted, so powerful were her emotions.

Restoratives were applied, but she moved not, and appeared not to breathe; it was feared she was dead. After a little while she began to recover. Looking around in amazement, she said, "Oh, what a pleasant dream I have had! I thought I had made my confession to you, and you had all forgiven me, and were going to take care of my poor, fatherless children."

Her father informed her it was not a dream, but a happy reality.

"Is it possible!" said she, "then I die happy! hap-

py! happy!—Oh, what bliss! I have not known a happy moment for years, but now that I am to die, I am permitted to realize true happiness. Oh, I am so glad I confessed my error and obtained your forgiveness! God will bless you, my dear friends, for your kindness in owning me as your poor, lost Eliza! You have removed the burden from my heart. My dear children," said she, addressing the little group, who were sobbing as if their hearts would break, "weep not for me! 'Tis true I am about to leave you, but our kind relations will take good care of you; you will be happier than you have been here. Always be good, and mind what they say to you; always follow their advice, and you will be safe." She was permitted to kiss each one of them; she bade them adieu; and sinking back under the exertion she had made, she seemed to fall asleep. The doctor felt of her pulse. She was dead! At this announcement, the children cried aloud; they felt that they were alone—they clung to the bed which contained all that was dear to them on earth—their mother!

Eliza's remains were placed in her father's tomb, and the children were provided for according to the promise made to their dying mother.

Thus we see the end of one who, in early life, bid fair to prosper and be happy; but who, by one false step, in disregarding the advice of her friends, was plunged into the vortex of misery, from which no human efforts could deliver her.

Reader! our tale is finished. If the lessons here taught shall be made useful to you, our object is accomplished.





**Attempt at Highway Robbery. Sheldon and his Comrade shot. See page 27.**





